Climate Change has increased the risk of flooding in the Chehalis Basin. The Office of the Chehalis Basin (OCB) purports that the proposed flood control dam will prevent flooding in a 100-year catastrophic flooding event; however, the Basin needs solutions that will reduce flood damage risk for residents and businesses in the near-term. These answers require science-based results which invest wisely and include assistance for homes.

Allocated to a single contractor, the OCB is seeking $40million for permitting, environmental review, and construction of the dam without a basin-wide, coordinated approach for a local action flood damage reduction program (LAP).

The Community Flood Assistance and Resilience program which supports acquisitions, retrofitting, and flood proofing for residents would only be allocated $3million.

The biennial budget calls for $33million to fund the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP), a science-based plan designed to help restore aquatic species habitat and enhance local economies. I find it unfair that the ASRP is only funded at $33million, while the proposed dam is allocated $40million.

Historically, the Chehalis Basin Strategy (CBS) has lacked coordination and accountability across programs, increasing costs and contributing to the degradation of aquatic species habitat. The CBS needs to work with Tribes to revise its governance structure to implement all components in a fair and just manner. A more integrated approach to align both the flood damage reduction strategy as well as the ASRP is apparent.

I urge the OCB to reject the proposed budget in favor of a more equitable and collaborative plan.